The File Transfer Balancing Act – Achieving Compliance without Compromising Business Agility

COMPLIANT, EASY TO USE, AND EASY TO MANAGE

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Executive Summary

The global economy is pushing businesses in virtually every industry to work faster and smarter. The company that can't respond to a customer need *almost immediately* is destined to lose out to a more nimble competitor that *can* meet that need. It comes down to *agility* – how fast a company can adapt to change and respond to demands.

While agility is crucial, companies can't act with an "anything goes" abandon. Rather, they must meet the rapid-fire business demands within the context of an increasing array of regulations designed to protect private information and preserve the integrity of business processes. Regulations such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), the Graham-Leach-Bliley Act (GLBA), and the California Information Practice Act (SB 1386) have a daily impact on how companies conduct their business.

The push and pull of these two incongruous forces – agility and compliance – have a tremendous impact on how companies of all sizes share and exchange information (files) rapidly and securely, both among colleagues within a company and with partners, suppliers and customers outside the company.

Because of its ubiquity and ease of use, email became the de facto standard method for sending and receiving information. However, email has many shortcomings, especially for handling large attachments and very sensitive information. Technical and security concerns have led email administrators to block employees from sending and receiving many types of file attachments.

Still, employees must do their jobs, and they will find ways to send and receive the files they need, whether or not these methods are provided or approved by company management or the IT department.

This whitepaper discusses the issues important in designing a process for user-to-user secure file transfer that simultaneously enhances business agility while ensuring that your methods for handling private information adhere to your security and privacy policies. The secure file transfer process discussed in this whitepaper is based on Accellion's secure file transfer solution, which is currently deployed in over 20 countries, supporting the exchange of business information between internal and external users. This solution has been chosen by numerous companies in industries that are regulated by Sarbanes-Oxley, HIPAA and other legislation in order to increase their security posture.

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Alternatives to Email for Secure File Transfer

There is a better alternative to email for sending files: secure file transfer. Its sole purpose is to deliver files from one person to another or to a group of people, quickly and in a secure and managed fashion. Secure file transfer keeps the business processes flowing, while handling information in a manner that is compliant with regulatory mandates and company security policies.

There are different secure file transfer options, mainly falling into four categories:

1. **Homegrown applications**, which are internally-developed or highly customized software programs that handle data for a specific business process, such as insurance claims processing or mortgage approval. The workflow is typically highly structured, with little need or even opportunity for ad hoc file transfer.

2. **SFTP (Secure File Transfer Protocol)**, a variant of the decades-old FTP (File Transfer Protocol) that is used to store files on server directories. Neither FTP nor SFTP is intended for non-technical business users who simply want to send and receive files at their convenience.

3. **Hosted file transfer services** are available from outside service providers who typically own and manage the servers where your files are stored when they await download from the recipient. Hosted services, as well as their costs, vary widely from one provider to another, and the user is dependent on someone else to ensure the service is managed properly and available when needed.

4. *In-network software or appliances* are solutions that become part of your IT infrastructure and are within your control. They typically integrate with enterprise applications such as email and directory services to become an integral part of your business processes.

Each of the methods listed above has its place in the file transfer space. Homegrown applications and SFTP are most likely to be incorporated into very structured business workflows, and are not suited to sending files on an ad hoc basis. On the other hand, hosted services and in-network software or appliances are intended for use by "end users" who want or need to send and receive files at their discretion. This makes them a nice complement or alternative to sending attachments through email.

Functional and technical requirements to support the business processes

In looking at ways to allow for easy and efficient file transfers that support the need for business agility while helping to achieve security and compliance, a number of business and technical requirements emerge. For the most part, the requirements can be categorized in terms of:

As with many recent initiatives, including HIPAA and the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, internal and external mandates are calling for every process to be documented, auditable, and accountable—including those business processes that incorporate or leverage traditional communications protocols.

Ease of Use – how well the solution meets the needs of the workers who send and receive large files as part of their business processes. The file transfer solution must:

√   Be easy for workers to use, with minimal disruption to the normal way of work and minimal or no training or intervention by IT specialists.

√   Allow for ad hoc file transfers, when, where and how the workers need them, 24x7.

√   Handle electronic files and groups of files (folders) that are virtually unlimited in size.

√   Allow for use by authorized personnel outside the organization without intervention from the IT department.

√   Provide verification that the recipient has received the information.

Security/Accountability – how well the solution meets the business needs to secure private information and prove accountability and adherence to compliance mandates. The requirements are:

√   Transmit files via secure channels and protocols.

√   Allow for encryption of especially sensitive data.

√   Secure the information so that it is received only by the intended recipient.

√   Provide accountability (i.e., an audit trail) for who sent and received the files, and when.

√   Ensure complete delivery of the information, even in the event of a disruption during transmission (i.e., checkpoint/restart capabilities).

√   Help the organization comply with regulatory requirements imposed by applicable laws such as Sarbanes-Oxley, GLBA, HIPAA and others.

Ease of Administration – how well the solution meets the technical needs of the IT organization. A desirable solution should:

√   Integrate into the existing network infrastructure with ease.

√   Be simple for the IT department to install, set up, administer and support.

√   Provide an easy way for file owners and administrators to manage the lifecycle of files that are being sent to others.

√   Allow for use by authorized outside guests without requiring the installation of client-side software such as encryption/decryption programs or an email interface, and without the need for support from the IT department.

√   Provide a secure web interface so that authorized users can utilize file transfer from anywhere and from a variety of devices.

> **Strategically, security is the easier part of the file transfer problem. The bigger issue is how to facilitate the exchange so that users are in control of the process instead of having to call IT for support every time the need arises.**

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File transfer solutions that meet the above criteria can enhance business process agility while at the same time ensure compliance with business process regulatory mandates.

The Accellion secure file transfer system provides the link between agility and security/compliance

Accellion's secure file transfer system is architected to address all of these critical functional and technical requirements for enterprise secure file transfer. The Accellion system is comprised of a selection of components that in combination create a robust – yet easy to use – system for securely sending and receiving large files and folders up to 20 gigabytes in size.

The key components of the system include:

- a secure file transfer appliance

- a web user interface

- an email plug-in for Microsoft Outlook and Lotus Notes

- an IT administrator interface

- business process automation agents

The total solution delivers on the promise to enhance business processes and worker productivity in a secure fashion.

Ease of use: The Accellion solution works the way people work

Knowledge workers are very comfortable with the email paradigm for sending and receiving information. In keeping with this model, Accellion provides a web interface as well as an optional email plug-in that are both very intuitive. The familiar email-like interface removes a major obstacle to adopting the new technology.

Users of the Accellion solution require little to no training and no assistance from the IT department to send files at any time. There is no need to request permission, passwords or help to send, retrieve or manage files. Using the web interface, an authorized user can send or retrieve files from anywhere, at anytime. Accellion puts file transfer control within the users' hands, but still gives IT the ability to control, safeguard and track IT assets.

Recognizing that people work with clients and colleagues outside of their own company, the Accellion file transfer solution allows employees to invite outside guests to use the solution, too. Provisioning (setting up) a guest can be handled in mere minutes without intervention from a system administrator, allowing for true ad hoc file transfer when the business process calls for it. There is nothing for guest users to install or configure on their PCs. They can send files to internal recipients, and *only* to internal recipients, ensuring that the file transfer system is not misused or hijacked (as so often is the case with FTP servers).

Until now, the few alternatives to sharing large files have not been easy to use or deploy, nor suitable for meeting widespread requirements for security, scalability, usability, and maintenance.

While email administrators often restrict the size of file attachments to 10 megabytes or less – which barely allows you to send a PowerPoint presentation these days – the Accellion secure file transfer solution can handle 20+ *gigabytes* in file/folder size with a single click. The system can handle large digital files such as architectural drawings, medical images, engineering blueprints, photographs and videos, large databases, and so much more.

Once a file or folder is sent and retrieved by the specified recipient, the sender gets a confirmation that the action is complete. It's a form of "certified mail" in the digital age, relieving the sender of the burden of calling to make sure the file was received.

Security/compliance: The Accellion solution secures your critical information assets

The protection of an organization's information assets is a top-of-mind issue for business and IT management. A security breach that reveals private information can be costly and perhaps even devastating to a business and its reputation. That being said, there are ways to improve the ability to secure private email attachments and other file transfers, and help meet the regulatory compliance requirements for a specific industry. Here are a few examples based on features within the Accellion secure file transfer system. (Note: The words in *italics* relate directly to specifications of the legislative mandates we've been talking about.)

End to end file security

Files are *encrypted*, uploaded, stored, and downloaded through *secure links* and *recipients are authenticated* ensuring only the intended recipients can access the file. Optionally, files can be scanned for viruses on upload/download.

File management

Users can review and *track files sent and their download status,* and can *manage the lifecycle of a file* (for automatic deletion).

Directory services authentication

LDAP and Microsoft Active Directory are used for authentication and to minimize setup efforts.

File transfer auditing and tracking

There are *auditable records detailing when recipients download attachments that can be summarized by individual recipient, file name, time and date.*

Automated download receipt

When a recipient downloads the file, *a return receipt is generated to the sender*. The file recipient is unaware of the return receipt and cannot turn it off.

Optional integration with enterprise storage infrastructure

Administrators can set up *rules to centrally manage the lifecycle of files per corporate retention policies*. Multiple copies are identified and removed based on set demand levels or after a period of time and *can be archived to long-term storage over time*.

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File security is less complicated when approached holistically as an automatic part of the IT system and not left up to end users to initiate. That's why the Accellion secure file transfer system includes standard features such as encryption, audit trails, sender and recipient authentication, and secure links, to name a few. And because it's what the government wants/tells you to do, compliance is a non-issue.

Ease of administration: The Accellion solution is as easy as "set it and forget it"

The Accellion secure file transfer solution is essentially an appliance that can be installed in less than an hour. All of the "expertise" needed to meet the business and technical requirements of secure file transfer is embedded into one device that easily plugs into virtually any network. Even large enterprises with a high demand for file transfer can install multi-office configurations rather quickly – literally in a day or less. Competent IT administrators don't require any special technical skills to install this solution.

Security is strengthened through easy integration with Microsoft Active Directory or an LDAP directory. Even integration with enterprise email (Microsoft Exchange/Outlook or Lotus Domino/Notes) is made simple with plug-ins for the desktop. Using the Accellion solution to off-load files from the email system reduces the need for costly email and storage upgrades.

Once the Accellion system is installed, there are virtually no support demands because IT intervention is not needed to upload or download files, clean up the server, or provision outside guest users. IT administrators, however, do maintain control over document lifecycle settings and audit reports. Overall, file security goes up while administration and support costs drop. What IT director wouldn't love to report these results to the CIO?

Examples: How Accellion customers use their secure file transfer systems

The Accellion secure file transfer solution fits into any industry or business market. Where there is a need to exchange files promptly and securely, Accellion addresses the need, as with these customers.

The Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement for Military Medicine, Inc.

The Foundation uses the Accellion secure file transfer system to get data from research sites located in Thailand, Tanzania and other countries. Prior to installing the Accellion solution, data was pressed to a CD ROM, which was then shipped to the Foundation center in the United States. However, when a CD is created with data, it has to be certified and transported in a sealed container via UPS or FedEX. There needs to be a record of who has touched the data container so that the researcher knows it hasn't been tampered with. Then when the researcher gets the data, he needs need to verify that the data contained on

the CD ROM is the same data that was originally written to the CD. The process takes a week or more for each CD.

With the Accellion system, file recipients can use a built-in security feature to ensure that what was sent is the same as what was received. The data submission process now takes minutes instead of days or weeks.

Foley & Mansfield, a nationwide law firm in the United States

Attorneys need to exchange information with each other across offices and with clients around the country. The traditional file transfer methods of email attachment and FTP have been highly problematic. With email, large files have been blocked, and with FTP/SFTP, the complex user interface requires too much IT support. This led the firm to rely on the expensive and slow manual method of shipping electronic information overnight via FedEx.

Using the Accellion solution, attorneys and clients are able to share electronic documents in real time, regardless of size, while lowering the time and costs of such transactions. The firm is able to provide higher levels of service to clients without incurring additional costs.

Wyckoff Heights Medical Center

Wyckoff Heights Medical Center is a large hospital in the New York City area and part of the Brooklyn Queen Healthcare Systems. To ensure the confidentiality of its patients and meet HIPAA regulations, Wyckoff needed a secure way to exchange electronic files outside of its network.

The Accellion solution allows the hospital to quickly send and receive files in a format that easily meets the strict security and privacy requirements. Wyckoff has the ability to authenticate the recipient and automatically manage each file and account lifecycle so that no confidential information is left exposed and no unauthorized user access for sensitive and confidential data takes place. Audit trails help document compliance with the HIPAA mandate. Moreover, patient care is improved because the medical records can be transferred from one healthcare provider to another without delay.

Conclusion

Accellion offers the logical building blocks for an enterprise secure file transfer solution.

Wouldn't it be convenient, practical, and prudent if there was an easy, user-driven alternative to email to securely transfer your increasingly large files without the worry of exposing private information?

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Accellion delivers just that – an intuitive way to securely exchange large files of any size with internal and external recipients. And since it easily integrates into Microsoft Outlook and Lotus Notes, the Accellion solution complements and enhances the email system by decoupling file transfer from email while providing transparent, uncompromising security.

Many Accellion customers report that they have gotten more than a way to send and receive files securely; they have found a way to generate new business opportunities and meet increasing customer demands, even in a highly regulated business environment. It all comes down to finding the right balance between *agility* and *security.*

About Accellion

Founded in 1999, Accellion, Inc. is the premier provider of on-demand secure file transfer solutions with an extensive customer base covering industries such as advertising/media production, legal, manufacturing, healthcare, consumer goods, higher education, and more.

Accellion provides an enterprise file transfer solution that is secure, economical and easy to use for both end users and IT management. Unlike email and FTP that can no longer meet the evolving security and business requirements, Accellion enables enterprises to eliminate FTP servers, create Sarbanes-Oxley compliant business processes, improve email infrastructure performance, and reduce IT management footprint requirements.

The Accellion secure file transfer solution allows internal and external users to send and receive files bi-directionally on the same platform without adding administrative overhead or infrastructure burden. Accellion offers an intuitive web interface with end-to-end file security and policy-based file lifecycle management. Accellion also supports plug-in integration with Outlook and Lotus Notes email clients. For multi-site enterprises, Accellion offers clustering for multi-site load balancing, intelligent replication and failover.

Accellion is a privately held company headquartered in Palo Alto, California with offices in North America, Asia and Europe.

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